

**Chancellor's Community Forum**  
**5 Year Plan**  
**October 29, 2008**  
**6:30-8:30 PM**  
**Jesús Aguirre**

*The notes below reflect our effort to summarize the comments, questions and concerns expressed at each meeting. They are not recorded verbatim and should not be considered direct quotations.*

**Overview:** Community members were happy to see information about **professional development** and teacher recruitment and teacher retention plans. They asked about the **achievement gap**, particularly the Latino student population and how that gap was going to be closed.

The group discussed how to create greater parental involvement in schools and engage the community. They also asked that each school have a comprehensive plan that communicates to parents what they can do to be involved.

They asked that the AYP report card be revamped and clarified for parents to read and understand. Test and **curriculum alignment** was also brought up as an important topic.

Community members were also concerned about **college** preparation, college readiness, the flow of information to students about college (exposure), and individualized graduation plans, especially in regard to the **immigrant population**.

Likewise, it was asked how we plan to communicate with immigrant parents clearly and/or plans regarding **bilingual education**. **Special Education** programs and staffing were also discussed.

Lastly, community members inquired into the status of school **funding** and equitable school **funding**.

**Keywords:** 5 Year Plan, Master Education Plan, after-school coordinators, literacy and numeracy coaches, DC CAS, funding, professional development, funding, Special Education, alternative programs, bilingual education, individualized Graduation Plans

**Presenter/Moderator:** Abigail Smith, Chief of Transformation Management  
Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

**Panelists:** Michelle Rhee, Chancellor  
Jesus Aguirre, Director of School Operations

**Codes:**

MR = Michelle Rhee, Chancellor

AS = Abigail Smith, Chief of Transformation Management

MK = Maurice Kennard, Principal of Francis-Stevens EC

CM = Community Member

JA = Jesus Aguirre, Director of School Operations

KR = Kathryn Russell, Associate

**Notes:**

**AS:** Introduces **MR** and 5-year Action Plan/annual performance plan. Reviews format of evening and introduces **MK**.

**MK:** Welcomes all, mentions school homecoming game, and introduces **MR**.

**MR:** Shares story about visiting school during lunch hour and speaking with student about school closings in a positive way. Talks about community feedback being important before rolling out action plan. **Master Education Plan**, Master Facilities Plan, Restructuring, Improvement status, all are being navigated—so put together 5 year plan to lay out the various plans that exist.

Welcome and looking forward to sitting down and talking with community members.

**AS:** Reviews documents each community member has just received.

Walks through structuring of **5 Year Plan** and vision of the future of DCPS. Using the **Master Education Plan** as foundation, refine, define, and sequence for the **5 Year Plan**. There are 6 areas of action:

1. Compelling schools
2. Great people
3. Aligned curriculum
4. Data-driven decisions
5. Effective central office
6. Engaged community.

Directs people to the performance plan and how it relates to reaching goals. Emphasizes it is a “working document” and iterative process involving the community.

**MR:** discusses the need for a **5 Year Plan** and how to prioritize and balance issues as the District moves forward.

Break out into rooms

**JA:** Introduces self to group.

**KR:** Introduces self. Notes will be online and the purpose of the meeting is to get community input on the **5 Year Plan** and **MEP**.

**JA:** *What part of the plan matches your vision for what an excellent DCPS would look like?*

**CM:** Particularly interested in the great people part of the plan, recruitment, retention, new teachers, and **professional development** programs for new teachers, mentoring for second year teachers.

**CM:** I would like to see closing of the **achievement gap** between high and low income students. *What is the plan to close that gap?* Wants to see more parental involvement on how to convey to parents the different ways to close the **achievement gap**.

**JA:** There is greater alignment of data, curriculum, and the plan. More parents are understanding the issue and are holding us accountable

**CM:** Teachers need more support. They do not get respect or the payment they need.

**CM:** There should be a comprehensive plan at each school so that parents can understand that they are supposed to do. Many parents want to be involved but are unsure what to do. Part 2 – Aligning the curriculum with test (**DC CAS**). The test should be aligned with curriculum so that teachers are not teaching to the test.

**JA:** Discussed Objective 6 – Engaged community: who provides information to parents, strategies in parental engagement and how to maximize their role and abilities to contribute to their child's education while having students be ready for success.

**CM:** **After-school coordinators** work to create a continuum of learning so that students don't know they are "still in school" but are still learning after school.

**After-school coordinators** work with churches, barber shops (free haircuts), and walks throughout the community to say, "We need you. The school needs you. The kids need you" and reaches out to bring parents back into the schools.

**CM:** Students need inspiration and positive influences to prepare for college. Some students are excited, but there doesn't seem to be enough push towards higher education. There should be a program to promote college.

**JA:** The city has great options for college and we need to make sure we expose them to our students.

**CM:** *What kind of partnerships are we looking for? Do we have a way to teach parents to understand the “report card AYP”?*

**JA:** DCPS tries to focus efforts on partners and intentions and ends up sometimes with more work at school, so we now have partnership office and out-of-school time office that vets and creates a standard for all organizations wishing to partner with the school system.

**CM:** The District should have more quality programs on the high school so that students are retained in the District.

**JA:** It is a DCPS goal to have a large number of compelling schools and giving parents a choice of the kind of school to enroll their student in.

**CM:** *What is the plan to teach teachers how to work with mainstreaming/inclusion of **Special Education** students?* When full student support is lacking, it reflects poorly upon the teacher.

**JA:** Not having full support also hurts student. We have training and additional supports in place—counseling, support services, additional services were sent to schools in restructuring to help our students in need.

**CM:** *What kinds of **alternative sites or programs** do we have for our poor behavioral students? Also, equitable **funding** throughout district? Why do some schools have more than others (supplies, money, etc.)?*

**JA:** Equitable **funding** is a big concern of ours and it is still being reworked to work not only with equity, but with equality, also. **Alternative programs** are being approached through the view of how do we re-engage these students? How do we give teachers the tools to help them? How do we make sure students have the right educational opportunities?

**CM:** Having a positive male presence and volunteers at a school can make a huge difference. Oftentimes career knowledge is low because lack of exposure to various careers as well as a diverse school.

**CM:** That’s why it is important to see interagency collaboration (ex: double the numbers initiative from state office). There is a wealth of resources here. Even all the programs in the world with lack of communication won’t solve anything. Having the public more aware of what’s happening is important.

**CM:** Some students want to do something or apply to college and are just lost on who to ask, where to go, how to do it, how to find information.

**CM:** *Is there a program or plan that focuses on immigrants and how to supply immigrant parents with information rather than relying on students to do the translating?*

**JA:** There is definitely recognition that parents are key part of this. We are working to build on our **bilingual education** program to assist with that.

**CM:** *Why we are “punitive” rather than enhancing and helping teachers who aren’t doing so well? There may be good educators that aren’t doing so well. Why are we looking at eliminating people rather than helping them?*

**JA:** We are supporting teachers that we do have. Additional **literacy and numeracy coaches** have been added to buildings to push bettering the teachers.

**CM:** Recruitment of excellent teachers is just one part of it all. Development of teachers is sometimes missed. There needs to be a greater focus on developing teachers already in the system.

**CM:** There does not seem to be a true welcoming environment to teachers and I have seen many teachers come and go. *Was it because of their relationship with the principal? The environment? Or the students?* I talk to children who hate their teacher, school, subject, etc. Teachers don’t feel loved or wanted. Having a positive environment is key. *Where is that in the plan?*

A positive environment is needed, where the children want to be there in school. We took students to see George Washington University and the kids were so excited to see it that they thought strongly about going to college and that mentoring program was continued

**JA:** Exposure to other opportunities is very important and starting young is very important. Just a simple exposure like going to GWU can make a big difference. As for the welcoming environment question, there is a detailed piece posted online that discusses that. There needs to be more consistency across schools and we need to work to create a framework, what exactly is expected and as that framework is built that will grow.

**CM:** Oftentimes schools are very different geographically across the city, if parents aren’t involved there is a message right there. Why aren’t at least 10 percent parents involved?

**CM:** Not having parents involved at a school has to do with lack of a welcoming environment and comfort at school. Parents know what is going on so they take on that sense and do not become involved.

**CM:** We talk about lack of parental involvement in urban areas, often times it could be parents who are also children themselves or undereducated.

**MR:** There is a more detailed implementation plan and metrics that are online to give further detail to the plan and how we will measure the goals.

**MR:** We have lots of great partners i.e. college summit and are working as early as middle school to encourage that, **Individualized Graduation Plans** so students are very clear on what they need to do and what colleges require for entry, so they are prepared and do not need remediation when they get to college and that they see high school as a springboard not the end-game

Parents will have input in development of “scorecard” so it is a reflection of information they want about a school in one glance, so that anyone be it parents, administrators, public can view that.

DC BAS will be available at school, but they are not proactively sent out like the **DC CAS**, but you can contact the principal for that information about your child.

**JA:** Please fill out blue form (2 questions) and we appreciate your feedback.  
Session closed.